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DE RUEHMO #4419 2501549
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3678
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHDX/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 004419

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/07/2017
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SUBJECT: GOR ON OSCE: UNRELENTING BUT MEASURED CRITICISM

Classified By: Political M/C Alice G. Wells. Reasons 1.4 (B/D).

¶1. (C) Summary. Spanish Foreign Minister Moratinos's August 30 visit to Moscow gave the GOR another chance to air its grievances against the OSCE. This time, the GOR's criticisms were less sharp and there was no hint of Russia's departure from the organization. FM Lavrov, while calling the OSCE an organization without clear, unified operational codes and too bogged down with "politicized" agendas, praised the 2008 Spanish Chairmanship and the OSCE's constructive and productive contributions. The two sides discussed Russian concerns: the OSCE Charter, ODIHR's election monitoring methodology, the need to give more weight to the political-military dimension, the adapted CFE, and Kazakhstan's bid for the 2009 Chairmanship. GOR officials warned that the OSCE might be without a chair in 2009 if the Madrid Ministerial rejects Kazakhstan. End summary.

Not Leaving but "Fixing" It

¶2. (U) FM Lavrov, during an August 30 press conference, praised the Spanish Chairmanship for its efforts to make the OSCE "more relevant" and to reinforce its role in European politics. He reiterated Russian proposals on:

- the OSCE Charter, without which, "it cannot transform itself to a Qll-fledged international organization."
- basic principles that should govern the election monitoring method of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).
- ways to strengthen the political-military dimension.

Lavrov reaffirmed the GOR's support for Kazakhstan's bid for the 2009 chairmanship.

Long List of Grievances; No Kazakh, No Chair

¶3. (C) MFA OSCE Coordinator Vladimir Yanin shared with us September 5 a list of the OSCE's alleged weaknesses that needed to be rectified. Using much stronger language than Lavrov, Yanin singled out ODIHR, the CFE, Kazakhstan's bid for the 2009 chairmanship and field missions. How the ODIHR conducts its operation is "close to our heart" and decisions about its operational basis should be made through an intergovernmental process, not by the bureau's "functionaries." The GOR believes that decisions made during the Brussels Ministerial have not been faithfully followed by ODIHR during the year. Key decisions on ODIHR's role in the Russian elections would be made during the upcoming September visit of ODIHR Director Christian Strohol in his meeting with the Central Election Commission Chairman Churov.

¶4. (C) Continuing with the GOR list of demands, Yanin insisted that the CFE Treaty be delinked from the Istanbul

Commitments, as the two documents are of "different nature." If the Madrid Ministerial rejected Kazakhstan, a year without a chair and difficulties with the Lithuanian bid for the 2010 chairmanship could not be excluded. According to Yanin, the GOR felt that OSCE field missions should be reorganized on a rotational basis along thematic issues, disregarding the geographical dichotomy that exists now. The GOR opposed the current "unwritten but standing" practice of ignoring the host nation's concerns about field mission activities and the practice of closing field missions once the host country joins NATO or the EU.

Spanish See a Slight Softening of Rhetoric

15. (C) Spanish Embassy Poloff Carlos Abela noted that during Moratinos's visit, Lavrov did not hint at the possibility of Russia's departure from the organization, as he had previously done with other OSCE representatives. Despite the hardline presented by Yanin, the Spanish Embassy was pleased with the visit and felt that the GOR has softened its position on the OSCE. Abela agreed that the GOR genuinely sought reform of the organization and was therefore focused on the OSCE Charter and field mission procedures.

Comment

16. (C) With many obstacles to consensus on key issues, it is unclear how Russia will behave during the Madrid Ministerial. Although GOR complaints are less strident, we see little lessening of its anti-OSCE rhetoric. Discord on the chairmanship and the lack of a strong chairmanship may embolden Russia even more.

Burns